

support what the President of Mali wants to do.

¶5. (S) The Ambassador noted it is important to have the Malian military be seen as helpful to the local populace. It is already a good thing that villagers do not have to worry about hiding away their daughters or locking up their food stores when they see the military coming, as has often been the case in other parts of Africa. In Mali, people generally have a neutral impression of the military and they trust them to behave correctly. Medical Civic Action Programs and Veterinary Civic Action Programs, tied into bilateral or joint exchange training exercises, reinforce that goodwill. She noted that obtaining the two Cessna Caravan aircraft under Embassy Bamako's FY 2010 Section 1206 proposal would help provide Mali with the eyes to oversee its own country.

¶6. (S) The Admiral raised the Oasis Enabler concept of operations. The Ambassador stated that she had never been formally briefed on the concept, and only informally found out about it on the margins of the Africa Bureau's Chiefs of Mission conference in Washington the preceding week. She said the notion of embedding advisors with the ETIAs is extremely problematic. It is conceivable that such a plan might be entertained in the future if the Malians repeatedly confront Al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), find they cannot manage it alone and ask directly for USG help. For the present and foreseeable future, however, the guiding approach should be the Malian President's approach. ATT has said repeatedly that he has the people, is not asking

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for foreign troops, and is in need of training and equipment only.

¶7. (S) There are other problems with embedding advisors. She noted that it is good the Algerians have decided to begin to cooperate, at least on some level, with the Malians. The Algerians do not want the United States involved, and if we did something like embed advisors, it would risk infuriating them and correspondingly diminishing their willingness to help. In addition, AQIM and the smugglers will know instantly there are U.S. advisors present and can be expected to try something. U.S. advisors would likely serve as lightning rods, exposing themselves and the Malian contingents to specific risk.

¶8. (S) This unnecessary risk raises the problem of adequate force protection, which in itself carries the downside of increasing significantly the number of U.S. forces on the ground in Mali. Such a significantly increased footprint could easily be perceived as evidence that AFRICOM does intend to install itself physically on the continent -- specifically in a compliant Mali -- a misperception the Command has worked hard to dispel. The Admiral said he understood and regretted that the Ambassador had not been kept better informed. He noted that Oasis Enabler is still a work in progress and started from the planning order to disrupt AQIM. He offered to brief the Ambassador and select members of the country team via DVC, which the Ambassador accepted.

¶9. (S) The Admiral noted that AFRICOM is very interested in getting other countries on board. In December exchanges with the Algerians, the latter had been more receptive than earlier. The USG had explored the possibility of making Creeksand products available to the Algerians and even giving them a say as to where Creeksand overflights could be most useful. He said that AFRICOM is also working to get Morocco more involved from a perspective of advancing their own internal security and reducing the flow of foreign fighters, in spite of their long-standing animus with Algeria. AFRICOM also hopes to reach out and include Libya and Egypt.

¶10. (S) The Ambassador said that ATT is relieved other countries in the region are getting on board to fight AQIM

and smuggling. She likened the problem until now to other countries dumping toxic waste in Northern Mali, then complaining about the stench and bidding Mali to clean it up.

Unfair or not, however, Mali is taking the hit in terms of the falloff in revenues from tourism, the inability of foreign aid agencies to conduct development projects in the north, the shame of having hostages held on Malian territory, no less than having one of the hostages killed, and the lost potential from oil and/or natural gas exploration. All this has made ATT decide to begin to take action. She said the use of the expression "Tamanrasset process" to describe a meeting of area chiefs of defense in the southern Algerian town by the same name is premature. There is no "process" as of yet.

So far, it is only a small, positive move in the right direction. Even if the long-planned summit meeting of heads of state in Bamako does not result in much substance, the symbolic recognition that terrorism is a shared problem of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and others in the region is a good thing. She noted that, for the time being, the United States should remain on the sidelines but should encourage the region to act and act collaboratively.

¶11. (S) In conclusion, the Ambassador noted that the USG should not see counterterrorism as the raison d'etre of U.S. presence in Mali. Development will continue to be a problem so long as the average number of children per woman remains close to seven. Building Mali's security capacity and encouraging Mali as a multi-ethnic democracy are equally important. A significant majority of Malians, regardless of their ethnicity or location, see the country as a unified whole and identify themselves overwhelmingly as Malians first, some ethnic group or religion second. This is a valuable commodity worth preserving. We have no indications

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that ATT is seeking to change the constitution to allow him to run for a third term, and the talk is focused on who will run to replace him in 2012.

¶12. (S) Admiral Mueller cleared this message.
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